

Employment, Independence & Equality

Department of Rehabilitation Biennial Report

on

Programs and Activities of the Division of Specialized
Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired and
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	EX	ECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2.	BA	CKGROUND	3
3.	BL	IND FIELD SERVICES (BFS)	4
4.	DE	AF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES (DHHS)	7
5.	BU	SINESS ENTERPRISES PROGRAM (BEP)	10
6.	OR	IENTATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND (OCB)	12
7.	INI	DEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS FOR OLDER INDIVIDUALS V	VHO
	AR	E BLIND (OIB)	14
8.	CO	NSUMER SUCCESS STORIES	16
8	3.1.		16
_		BFS Success Stories	10
		BFS Success Stories DHHS Success Stories	
8	3.2. 3.3.	DHHS Success Stories BEP Success Stories	18 19
8	3.2. 3.3.	DHHS Success Stories	18 19

1. Executive Summary

The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) presents this biennial report to the Legislature on Programs and Activities of the Specialized Services Division (SSD) providing services to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Pursuant to the requirements of Senate Bill 105, Chapter 1102, Statutes of 2002 (hereafter referred to as SB 105), this report provides statistics on competitive employment placements for persons who are blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing, as well as an update on the programs administered by the SSD. This is the DOR's sixth biennial report to the Legislature. The first five reports, dated July 1, 2005, July 1, 2007, July 1, 2009, July 1, 2011, and July 1, 2013, are available upon request.

For the sixth biennium, the total competitive employment placements continued to be consistently higher than before the SB 105 implementation, in spite of a decline in placements seen for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2009-10 through SFY 2012-13, which is attributed to staff furloughs and labor market influences. While the average weekly earnings for consumers with blindness and visual impairments fluctuate annually, in all years, the average weekly earnings for blind and visually impaired consumers served by the Blind Field Services (BFS) District is nearly one-third higher than the total departmental caseload. The average weekly earnings have consistently remained at least \$50 higher than in SFY 2003-04 when the BFS was established. This indicates that specialized services aid in more successful transition of the blind and visually impaired consumers from dependence on social services and public benefits to independence and competitive employment.

Since SFY 2003-04, the average weekly earnings for deaf and hard of hearing consumers remained higher than the total departmental caseload. The Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf continue to account, on average, for over 80 percent of the competitive employment placements for deaf and hard of hearing consumers. This suggests that specialized services also aid in successful transition of deaf and hard of hearing consumers from dependence on social services and public benefits to independence and gainful employment.

From Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2002-03 to FFY 2013-14, the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) has experienced an increase of nearly \$9.2 million in sales, an increase of nearly \$2.3 million in net profit income to vendors, and an increase of \$39,628 in average annual vendor income. While the total number of facilities has dropped by 71 since FFY 2002-03, there were a total of 62 new facilities established over the years. The financial gains reflect the benefits of closing less profitable facilities. Noticeably, the number of facilities continues to outpace vendors operating facilities.

The Orientation Center for the Blind (OCB) has served over 470 students since SFY 2002-03. Length of services for each student averages seven and a half months. The students who received OCB services have been positioned to advance their employment goals, increase their independence, and further their individual pursuit of equality.

The Title VII, Chapter 2, Older Individuals Who Are Blind (hereafter referred to as OIB) program continues to see an increase in the number of individuals aged 55 or older with severe visual impairments that received services. Most notably, 350 additional persons were served in FFY 2013-14 over the prior fiscal year.

2. Background

The DOR's mission is to work in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy resulting in employment, independent living, and equality to individuals with disabilities. The primary program administered by the DOR is the Vocational Rehabilitation program, which provides a wide range of services designed to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in meaningful employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

The Specialized Services Division (SSD) was established with the enactment of SB 105, which recognized the need for a more formalized and tailored approach to providing rehabilitation, job training, and placement services to individuals with sensory disabilities. The goals of the SSD are:

- (1) To assist persons who are blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing to gain competitive employment.
- (2) To enlarge economic opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired and deaf or hard of hearing.
- (3) To enhance the independence and self-sufficiency of blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing persons.

Under the SSD, administrators, counselors, and support staff were realigned to create the Blind Field Services (BFS) District and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) program. Staff within the BFS District and the DHHS program are located throughout the state and provide specialized services to their respective consumer groups. The BFS District staff report directly to the SSD Deputy Director. In contrast, the DHHS administrative program staff report to the SSD Deputy Director, while field staff (i.e., Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf) report to local supervisors, administrators and the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division Deputy Director.

In addition to the realignment, the SSD assumed oversight of the Business Enterprises Program, the Orientation Center for the Blind, and the Older Individuals who are Blind program.

3. Blind Field Services (BFS)

The BFS is a statewide District that provides specialized and comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to Californians with vision loss. The BFS utilizes a service delivery team approach through nine units of Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind and paraprofessional staff managed by the Team Managers and a District Administrator, all of whom have specialized knowledge and training in serving this population.

Since the last biennial reporting period, the BFS has worked in collaboration with the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division to transition to a new Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery model. This has resulted in the addition of 25 positions to the BFS, including Employment Coordinators to provide job placement support and a district operations support team. The addition of these positions under BFS management has allowed the BFS to operate more efficiently and effectively in serving consumers.

The BFS has provided ongoing in-service education, at least annually, to all BFS staff and their community partners to increase their expertise and remain current on trends and innovations leading to successful employment outcomes for blind and visually impaired consumers. In 2013, all BFS staff met for a three-day training in Northern California, and again in 2014, in Southern California. Training included assistive technology, medical and psychological aspects in serving individuals with vision loss, effective intakes and assessments, regulations, job readiness and retention, and employer panels on hiring. The provision of in-service education for the BFS staff has served to ensure that the average weekly earnings for blind and visually impaired consumers continue to be higher than the average weekly earnings for all consumers served by the DOR.

The DOR Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 has been implemented, and incorporates the BFS strategic plan. The goals in the BFS plan include: maximizing employment opportunities and self-sufficiency resulting in a higher quality of life; promoting equal access for Californians with disabilities; and a focus on providing effective customer-focused services to consumers, partners, employees, and employers. In addition, BFS has implemented a Transition Aged Youth Committee to focus on identifying and serving blind and visually impaired high school students that could benefit from BFS services.

The following table provides data on the total number of competitive employment placements of blind and visually impaired consumers for the DOR as a whole compared to those served just by BFS, as well as average weekly earnings for these same two groups.

State Fiscal Year (SFY)	Total Competitive Placements	BFS Placements	BFS Placements % of Total	DOR Average Weekly Earnings**	BFS Average Weekly Earnings
2001-02	389	N/A	N/A	\$334	N/A
2002-03	390	N/A	N/A	\$340	N/A
2003-04	347	214	61.6%	\$340	\$497
2004-05	363	242	66.7%	\$344	\$513
2005-06	452	355	78.5%	\$351	\$484
2006-07	445	363	81.5%	\$363	\$565
2007-08	404	323	80.8%	\$372	\$554
2008-09	406	347	85.5%	\$374	\$619
2009-10	278	235	84.5%	\$355	\$578
2010-11	368	309	83.9%	\$367	\$629
2011-12	354	306	86.4%	\$351	\$556
2012-13	344	281	81.7%	\$388	\$585
2013-14	402	335	83.3%	\$386	\$609
2014-15*	165	127	77%	\$394	\$604

Source: Adhoc Reports-Field Computer System (pre SFY 2010-11)

AWARE (post SFY 2010-11)

^{*}As of December 31, 2014

^{**} DOR average weekly earnings are comprised of competitive weekly earnings of all consumers served including the BFS consumers N/A- BFS District implemented July 1, 2003

While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer success stories on the BFS services can be found in section 8.1.

For the next biennium, the BFS will continue to hire and train new positions under the new service delivery model. The BFS Transition Aged Youth Committee will increase outreach to high school aged students, consistent with the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) passed in July 2014 that places significant emphasis on providing pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities. The WIOA also places greater emphasis on job driven training and employer engagement to further support outcomes for individuals seeking employment. In response, the BFS, in collaboration with VRED staff and stakeholders, will focus on activities to better prepare consumers towards job readiness outcomes, including developing additional relationships with employers and increasing partnerships with the local Workforce Development Boards, training programs and employment programs.

4. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS)

Although the DHHS program has been aligned within the SSD, the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RCDs) and their supervisors do not report directly to the Deputy Director of the SSD. Rather, they report to administrators over the districts in which they serve. While most of the RCDs receive supervision from generalist supervisors, administrators have placed their RCDs under specialty supervisors to focus expertise and promote consistency of service-delivery in three districts. The DHHS program provides technical guidance and consultation to these administrators and supervisors who manage the RCDs as well as support services, such as the annual SB 105 training and regional training for the RCDs and DOR staff.

For the past two years, the DHHS program focused on providing Deaf Sensitivity training to all of the districts in support of the transition to the new Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery model. The DHHS also completed the orientation video on DOR services in American Sign Language (ASL) and has made this resource available to RCDs, community partners and stakeholders. Another key accessibility effort includes the development and implementation of the use of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) which provides remote ASL interpreting services through the use of video equipment when local interpreting services are not available. This service enables RCDs who rely on interpreting services to coordinate services for deaf and hard of hearing consumers without any delay.

The DHHS has provided in-service training annually, to the RCDs. This training has expanded to include the team members and other DOR staff who support the RCDs under the new Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery model. Community rehabilitation programs and partners continue to be invited to the training to support the ongoing collaboration with the RCDs leading to improved services for the deaf and hard of hearing population.

The table on the next page provides data on the total number of the DOR's competitive employment placements of deaf and hard of hearing consumers compared to those served by the DHHS program, and the average weekly earnings for the total DOR caseload and DHHS consumers.

State Fiscal Year (SFY)	Total Competitive Placements	DHHS Placements	DHHS Placements % of Total	DOR Average Weekly Earnings**	DHHS Average Weekly Earnings
2001-02	757	N/A	N/A	\$334	N/A
2002-03	824	N/A	N/A	\$340	N/A
2003-04	872	760	87.2%	\$340	\$411
2004-05	785	729	92.9%	\$344	\$406
2005-06	826	772	93.5%	\$351	\$417
2006-07	737	728	98.8%	\$363	\$432
2007-08	740	695	93.9%	\$372	\$464
2008-09	710	596	83.9%	\$374	\$477
2009-10	560	536	95.7%	\$355	\$553
2010-11	652	432	66.3%	\$367	\$482
2011-12	614	454	73.9%	\$351	\$486
2012-13	606	414	68.3%	\$388	\$450
2013-14	610	512	83.9%	\$386	\$469
2014-15*	374	267	71.4%	\$394	\$442

Source: Adhoc Reports -Field Computer System (pre SFY 2010-11), AWARE (post SFY 2010-11)

In the July 1, 2011 report, it was noted that the DOR recognized the number of DHHS placements had been inadvertently inflated. Recent implementation of the new case management system has allowed DOR to refine and report actual competitive placements.

^{*}As of December 31, 2014

^{**}DOR average weekly earnings are comprised of competitive weekly earnings of all consumers served including the DHHS consumers N/A - DHHS program implemented July 1, 2003

While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer success stories, on deaf and hard of hearing services, can be found in section 8.2.

For the next biennium, the DHHS will enhance its web page on the DOR's public website for use by consumers, community partners, and other interested stakeholders. The DHHS will continue to provide training to RCDs, DOR staff and partners in support of the new Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery model and educate the deaf and hard of hearing communities on the benefits of this model. The use of VRI to support consumers receiving services in DOR offices will also be explored. Furthermore, the DHHS will work in collaboration with the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division on responding to changes required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

5. Business Enterprises Program (BEP)

The BEP was created through the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, which authorized a priority for BEP in placing vending facilities on federal property. California State law, enacted in 1945, expanded the federal program to give priority to the BEP vending facilities on State property.

The BEP provides training and support to enhance self-employment for visually impaired Californians. Ten trainees have completed the BEP course since 2012. The curriculum is evolving to be computer based learning with more emphasis on occupational skills training to better prepare the trainees to operate a food service business. Other BEP services include: developing new facilities; overseeing the selection process for placement of vendors into these facilities; providing technical assistance to vendors; purchasing and maintaining all vendor equipment; and managing the funding for new and existing facilities.

The BEP vendors operate facilities including cafeterias, snack bars, convenience type stores, coffee carts, vending machine routes, and Department of Defense contracts on federal, state, county, and city property. Currently, there are 114 BEP facilities operated by 96 vendors throughout the State. Since July 2012, the BEP has opened four new facilities.

The following table provides an overview of the BEP activities since Federal Fiscal Year 2002-03.

Federal Fiscal Year	Vendor Person Years of Employment	Gross Sales	Net Profit to Vendors	Average Vendor Earnings	Total Facilities	Number of New Locations
2002-03	138.3	\$38,141,507	\$5,052,869	\$36,536	185	17
2003-04	128.2	\$37,035,071	\$4,564,908	\$35,608	182	13
2004-05	122.6	\$41,545,828	\$5,012,233	\$40,883	178	10

Federal Fiscal Year	Vendor Person Years of Employment	Gross Sales	Net Profit to Vendors	Average Vendor Earnings	Total Facilities	Number of New Locations
2005-06	129.1	\$48,707,789	\$5,318,684	\$41,198	167	5
2006-07	131.5	\$48,823,250	\$5,897,458	\$44,848	156	1
2007-08*	122	\$37,739,686	\$6,106,816	\$50,056	151	3
2008-09*	116	\$35,754,322	\$5,911,371	\$50,960	149	4
2009-10	112	\$48,629,881	\$6,372,221	\$56,895	140	1
2010-11	110	\$48,514,643	\$6,043,826	\$54,944	136	3
2011-12	114	\$47,742,039	\$6,688,849	\$64,316	134	1
2012-13	104	\$48,452,853	\$7,139,353	\$70,518	119	3
2013-14	96	\$47,315,041	\$7,319,353	\$76,164	114	1

Source: RSA 15 Reports

Data does not include Department of Defense

While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer success stories on the BEP services can be found in section 8.3.

The BEP's focus for the next biennium is to become the preferred food service choice throughout the state. To accomplish this vision, the BEP has procured a software program, currently in development, to more effectively maintain and track program data, and will explore additional functionality such as a web portal for blind and visually impaired vendors to view and pay fees required to operate their facilities. In addition, the BEP will remodel facilities to meet the needs of today's more sophisticated customers, and train the BEP staff on current trends in food service marketing and management to provide effective technical assistance to the vendors.

6. Orientation Center for the Blind (OCB)

The OCB is a DOR owned and operated residential training facility that assists adults who are visually impaired and blind adjust to their vision loss. Credentialed teachers and qualified rehabilitation professionals provide a full curriculum of classes and experiences individually tailored to assist each student to reach their full potential for independence and to develop pre-vocational skills. Length of training is individualized to meet students' needs, and students' enrollment averages seven and a half months. The residential facility is available to support up to 36 students at any given time.

With state-of-the-art assistive technology and an office training area for student computer training, OCB students have opportunities to develop pre-vocational and independent living skills. The training curriculum is continually being updated by the teachers to teach applicable and relevant skills to the students. The four studio apartments continue to allow opportunities for students to practice independent living skills prior to exiting the OCB program. These services assist OCB graduates to transition directly from the OCB with skills to support independent living, community involvement, school preparedness and job readiness.

The internship program implemented in 2012, where students assist in the operations of the facility, continues to provide invaluable work experience. The assignments are in food services, grounds keeping, janitorial services, housekeeping, and administrative sections of the campus. These assignments give the students work experience to develop interpersonal work relationships, learn time management, and build confidence and self-esteem while engaged in training.

During this biennial period, the OCB has continued to undergo an organizational restructure in response to staff changes resulting from retirements or individuals leaving for other opportunities. To meet the operational and programmatic needs of the OCB program and campus, OCB reclassified a vacant position to allow for a second Assistant Administrator, which was filled in October 2014. The Assistant Administrator positions at OCB are responsible for insuring the overall functioning of facility operations and consumer services under the guidance of the OCB Administrator. This new management structure allows for opportunities to advance the OCB program and services.

During SFY 2012-13 and SFY 2013-14, the OCB served 61 and 62 students respectively. Through the first half of SFY 2014-2015, 43 DOR consumers have been served. The OCB continues to strengthen strategies to increase the enrollment and utilization of the OCB program and anticipates the total number of students to be served will exceed the prior year. While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer testimonials on the OCB services can be found in section 8.4.

For the next biennium, the OCB administrators and staff will continue to conduct a major curriculum review to include more training opportunities that support the students' transition to work, school and home settings upon graduating from the OCB program.

7. Independent Living Skills for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB)

Title VII, Chapter 2 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, authorized and funds independent living services to individuals age 55 or older whose severe visual impairment makes competitive employment difficult to attain, but for whom independent living goals are feasible.

For this biennial period, the OIB program finalized the new funding methodology that has been under discussion and in planning for several years. Beginning October 2014, the OIB funds are now allocated to California counties based on a formula of geographic size and the age 55-plus population of each county. This formula of allocating available funds by counties has increased the incentive for agencies to provide their blindness services in as many counties as they could serve. As a result, 57 of California's 58 counties now have at least one service agency offering OIB services to county residents. This is a significant step forward in the goal of reaching the underserved and unserved areas of California. Additionally, there are seven agencies new to the OIB program for a total of 22 provider agencies for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014-15. Consequently, the OIB funds are being distributed more widely and through more provider agencies than ever before.

The following table shows the growth since FFY 1999-00 in grant dollars awarded and the number of individuals who received OIB services.

Federal Fiscal Year	Federal Award	Number Served
1999-00	\$1,004,368	680
2000-01	\$1,713,782	2,162
2001-02	\$2,290,501	2,332
2002-03	\$2,604,141	2,874
2003-04	\$3,086,561	3,326
2004-05	\$3,367,434	3,701
2005-06	\$3,260,338	4,113
2006-07	\$3,258,596	4,349
2007-08	\$3,168,533	4,715

Federal Fiscal Year	Federal Award	Number Served
2008-09	\$3,381,947	5,272
2009-10	\$3,386,393	5,509
2010-11	\$3,379,345	5,874
2011-12	\$3,397,041	7,268*
2012-13	\$3,283,627	6,228
2013-14	\$3,279,751	6,553

Source: RSA-7-OB Reports

For the next biennium, the OIB program will orient provider agencies new to the program, conduct program reviews to ensure quality OIB services, and provide technical assistance as necessary.

Finally, the success of services offered through the various SSD programs has benefited immensely from the participation of the Blind Advisory Committee and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee. These committees were established in SB 105 to advise the DOR Director on means to increase competitive employment, enlarge economic opportunities, enhance independence and self-sufficiency, and otherwise improve services for persons who are blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing.

^{*}increase due to one-time American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding

8. Consumer Success Stories

All names have been altered to protect the privacy of the consumers and recipients of SSD services.

8.1. BFS Success Stories

Charles knew immediately when he first saw a computer in 1978 that he wanted to work with computers. After graduating from high school in 1989, he pursued an engineering degree at his local community college in Northern California. He was deaf as a child and had low-vision. He dropped out of college when his eyesight became worse. He transferred to the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) in New York to learn braille and other blindness skills. Upon completing the HKNC program, Charles returned to California and, with the assistance of his BFS counselor, enrolled in a community college and completed a certificate program in adaptive computer instruction. He landed a part-time job at the local community center for the blind and visually impaired as an Assistive Technology Instructor. In January 2014, with his BFS counselor's support, Charles signed-up for the San Francisco Lighthouse for the Blind's Employment Immersion program to receive job placement services for fulltime employment. Through this service, he applied and tested for an operating system tester position at a major computer company. The company called and offered him a full time job the next day. Charles is now using his technical skills to test computer products and voice applications to ensure they are accessible for both blind and deaf individuals.

Despite his dwindling vision, John wished to keep his job of eight years in the custodial department at a local university. The BFS counselor worked closely with John's employer's Human Resources (HR) department on the accommodations to allow John to continue working with his deteriorating vision. His employer agreed to provide all of the required accommodations with the exception of glasses, which the HR department stated was a personal item. His BFS counselor authorized the necessary visual aids for him. Additionally, John's work schedule was adjusted to accommodate his public transportation needs. He continues to work 40 hours a week and is grateful to his BFS counselor.

Richard came to the DOR at 57 years old, homeless and living on unemployment. He had been laid off from a job he held for many years. Richard's BFS counselor initially authorized independent living services (ILS) training and individual counseling sessions for him. His BFS counselor also provided assessments, assistive technology (AT), and low vision aids that he needed. Richard wanted to find employment immediately and was placed with a Job Developer. He was able to find part time employment to temporarily sustain him, and continued to actively look for full time work. Later, Richard secured two positions, one at a retail store, and after renewing his insurance license, another selling insurance.

Chris came to the DOR five years ago at the age of 44. He was totally blind in one eye and had just become totally blind in the other eye. He held a Master's Degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and a minor in Quantitative Methods. He was in a very discouraged frame of mind due to his total loss of vision. Chris desperately wanted assistance with ILS and with his mental and emotional recovery. His BFS counselor authorized the services he needed. Chris learned that regular exercise was of great benefit when he became discouraged. He became very active in the Blind Stokers, a tandem cycling club for the blind. With confidence from his newly acquired skills and a fresh state of mind, Chris started a business with his father doing motivational speaking on the mental and emotional benefits of physical activity.

Judy began DOR services at the age of 19. Her BFS counselor worked with her in obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Human Services with an excellent grade point average. After graduating from college, Judy participated in job search with two community partners. Judy was quite active in the job search process even though her remote location made transportation extremely difficult. Her BFS counselor explored the possibility of Judy applying for a Close-out Specialist position with a local agency serving blind and visually impaired individuals. Judy was very enthusiastic about this possibility. Judy was placed into the online training class for the agency and passed the exam with a score of 100 percent. She interviewed with the Director of the agency and was hired.

Linda began losing her vision due to tumors at age 15 and was told that surgery to correct the tumors could cause brain damage. Another challenge as a teenager was having to seek political asylum in the United States. She left her immediate family in her home country to live with her

grandparents. When she came to the DOR at age 21, she was already enrolled in a community college and had a 4.0 GPA. Her vocational goal was to become a Biomedical Engineer. Linda's BFS counselor supplied her with AT and ILS services. Her BFS counselor supported Linda through a Master's Degree program. After Linda received her graduate degree, her BFS counselor assisted with employment search. Linda is now earning \$90,000 per year as a Biomedical Engineer. This is a pay increase from \$33 an hour after only three months of employment with the same company.

8.2. DHHS Success Stories

Janice, a deaf female who uses American Sign Language (ASL) as her primary language, applied for DOR services in 2003 through her high school Transition Partnership Program. She participated in vocational training at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in New York. After completing the pre-baccalaureate degree requirements, she transferred to the Rochester Institute of Technology and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Packaging Science. Janice and her Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) spent many hours via the videophone discussing and preparing her to apply and interview for jobs. Janice went through an extensive interview process and was hired by an international automotive company.

Charles, a deaf male, became a DOR consumer in April 2014 after working many years in the construction industry. He had a noise induced hearing loss from working around heavy machinery for many years. He met with his RCD and Employment Coordinator to discuss how best to use his transferrable skills in construction to obtain his new goal as a building inspector. The RCD guided his search, and after several months of applying, he found a job at a solar company as an Installer/Inspector earning \$20.00 an hour.

John is a male with a hearing loss and a criminal record. Additionally, he lives in an area that has a high unemployment rate. These three factors combined made John's case more challenging than the average consumer. The DOR provided John with new hearing aids and assisted him with his employment search by referring him to a job development program. He applied for many jobs with the job developer. As a result of his tireless efforts in sending out applications, he obtained interviews. After an interview, background checks would be conducted and he would instantly

be disqualified based on his criminal record. His RCD repeatedly advised him that it was vital to fully disclose his record on the application and during the interview process. Things finally came together because John followed this guidance. His honesty impressed the employer, and he now has a job as a transit driver. His assigned Service Coordinator was instrumental in this case as she worked tirelessly to obtain the required documentation from the Department of Motor Vehicle in a timely manner. John earns \$12 an hour.

Gary became a consumer in Spring of 2010. He had a profound sensorineural hearing loss and needed new hearing aids to support his job search. His RCD referred him to the Work Link employment program for job preparation and job search services for about a year. With the employment services received, Gary was able to find a job by networking. He started working part time at a consulting management group in March of 2014. His pay is \$25 an hour. Gary has also been able to obtain other freelance work.

Marcy, a deaf consumer who uses ASL as her primary language, became a DOR consumer in May 2011. Marcy was interested in obtaining employment as quickly as possible. Following her intake, Marcy was immediately referred to the local Workability III program at Ohlone College in Fremont. As part of the Workability III program, she participated in the Job Club, received individualized job development services, and began volunteering at the local food bank to build work experience. She eventually was hired as a Cake Decorator, despite having no bakery experience. The store manager took the initiative to fully train her for this job. After a month, Marcy's manager reported that she was doing exceptional work and that her cake production speed and quality of work exceeded their expectations. The DOR provided interpreting services and job coaching support for her first two weeks of employment and paid her union dues. At the time of Marcy's hire, she earned \$9 per hour.

8.3. BEP Success Stories

After completing college, Theodore's vision deteriorated and he was declared legally blind. After wrestling with the depression that often accompanies a life-altering health diagnosis, he explored the idea of applying to BEP training program. Theodore had earned a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts and also graduated from the Le Cordon Bleu School of Culinary Arts. He graduated from the BEP training program in January

of 2014 and eagerly awaited an announcement for a location in the geographical area in which he wished to live. In March 2014, Theodore applied for a location as a prospective BEP Vendor. He aced the interview and was awarded the location. Reports are coming in from customers that they love his food and service. If the numbers for Theodore's location continue on the trend that he has established, his first year in business will realize a six-figure personal income.

Sandra earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from a major university in Los Angeles, speaks several languages, and worked as a foreign language interpreter. Sandra found that the career path she had chosen was limited, and she would be underemployed because of her blindness. She then decided to enter the BEP training program and after graduation, immediately began interviewing for locations. In July 2013, Sandra was awarded her first location in Los Angeles. Sandra definitely had mastered the art of interviewing. She carefully monitored her inventory, provided a menu and daily specials, and built her working capital. After less than a year, a location was announced in San Diego that was very appealing to her. She applied for the location, interviewed for it, and was selected. She now has a new group of satisfied customers.

Mary applied and became eligible for DOR services in May 2011 due to diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. She expressed interest in becoming a BEP vendor and commenced her BEP training in October 2012. She successfully completed the BEP training in April 2013 and now is a successful BEP Operator of a café in a California State Building in Southern California. In addition to operating her café, Mary has several contracts for catering jobs for the State Legislature and Governor's office. Mary is doing extremely well with her BEP operation and is grateful for the opportunity given to her.

8.4. OCB Success Stories

Jose is an active eighty-year-old husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. While he was at the OCB, he has learned, among other things, how to touch type, travel safely and confidently with a white cane, and organize those personal items that he can no longer identify visually. He has even tried his hand at cooking, an activity that his wife has overseen for most of their married life. He has returned home with a collection of adaptive skills that he will be able to use for the rest of his life. He continues to put these skills to good use.

Helen is 19 years old and legally blind. She was diagnosed with Stargardt macular degeneration when she was 16 years old. Helen was almost 18 when her parents moved across the country to South Carolina. Helen really needed to learn to rely on herself and gain life management skills. She chose OCB because she wanted to gain the skills and tools needed to become independent. While at OCB for eight months, she learned many skills, such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, budgeting, new technologies, and much more. She felt that OCB helped her to branch out of her comfort zone and try new things. Since her stay at OCB, Helen entered college full-time and used all of the skills learned at OCB. At the end of the semester, Helen reported that not only had she made friends in class and become close to the teachers, but also had a GPA of 3.76. Next semester, in addition to taking a full class load, Helen is planning to save to get her first apartment with a friend. She is really proud of her accomplishments.

Bob is an individual who has been blind for five years. He reported that OCB, its staff and experiences will remain with him for the rest of his life. He is presently beginning the second quarter of the Education Specialist Credential Program for Visual Impairments at a California State University. Upon commencing the program Fall 2014, he moved into campus housing where he lives independently, and successfully cooks, cleans, organizes, and performs all of the household duties. He carried a full time class load, completed all required coursework, navigated to all of his classes independently, learned and accessed the university program website, and managed his income and financial aid. He shared that initially these tasks were extremely daunting for him and there were many times that he contemplated walking away from the whole situation. By the end of the quarter, Bob reported that many of these things became second nature, and he was able to put more effort into his final exams. Bob feels that OCB offers a plethora of benefits to anyone who is diligent and motivated.

8.5. OIB Success Stories

Sue is 59, from Marin County, and has vision loss from Stargardt macular dystrophy. She describes her main visual difficulties as seeing details, including contrast and depth perception. Sue started going to the LightHouse of Marin in 2012 when she lost more vision. She had a Low Vision Evaluation, participated in a ten-week Changing Vision, Changing Your Life group class, and then thought the services she received were sufficient. She came back later to borrow an Identify Cane for a trip to

India, and that cane became her best friend. With this new found understanding that she could benefit from Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training, Sue chose to attend the LightHouse's one-week immersion training, using OIB funding. There she gained additional appreciation for this skill and was motivated to have more O&M training as well as assistive technology training using her iPhone and iPad to prepare for a hiking trip in Yosemite. After practice on local trails she decided to use the long cane with ball tip on dirt and rocky trails and to use hiking poles with a human guide on steep or uneven paths. In early September 2014, she successfully completed her trip to Yosemite and reported feeling confident and comfortable. Since her hiking, Sue has expressed interest in chatting with anyone in the OIB program who is fearful of learning how to use cane travel to their benefit.

Viola is a 58 year old woman diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy. She learned about the OIB program at Blindness Support Services (BSS) in Riverside from a friend. She contacted the office in the Spring 2014. During a home visit and intake, the BSS staff determined Viola had difficulty with many everyday tasks, and she expressed her desire to regain her independence and once again be able to care for her family. In response, the BSS staff provided her with training in Daily Living Skills, O&M, Rehabilitation Technology, and Peer Support/Adjustment Counseling. The BSS staff also provided her with a large print telephone, a large print calendar, a portable/accessible sewing kit, and a hand held magnifier. As the result of all her training and new tools, Viola is now able to independently use public transportation, thread a needle and hand stitch buttons, keep track of her medical appointments, dial phone numbers, read her medication bottles and daily mail, and prepare a meal and clean properly. "I feel amazing because I am in control of my life again and gained back the independence I once had before my visual impairment," she said.

Dave is a 75 year old male. He is a glaucoma and cataract patient whose condition had resulted in an inability to travel independently outdoors on bright, sunny days and at night. He was essentially stranded in his home most days and presented as "losing hope" for continuing his life without entering a residential care facility. After establishing a working relationship with an OIB provider, Dave was issued a Mobility Cane and Glare Glasses. He also received cane instruction, including independent low vision street crossing skills, use of public transportation, and trip planning. Dave now reports that he is traveling independently for personal needs along with

pursuing his longtime employment as a musician by booking performances locally.

Karen first contacted Society for the Blind in May 2014. A 62 year-old female, Karen had been losing vision due to glaucoma for the past four years, with the rate of loss accelerating more recently. She was in the process of starting a second career running a small business, had recently remarried, and was overwhelmed with fear and apprehension of how her vision loss might jeopardize these new life opportunities. Karen attended a Senior Retreat in August 2014, and found it to be a transformative experience. During the retreat, she was taught O&M skills using the long white cane, Daily Living Skills (cooking, cleaning, money management, personal care) and communications and technology skills. Karen learned techniques that will help her to continue to grow her business and to empower her to continue to function independently. She has not become overly dependent on her spouse, which she feared might happen. Karen acknowledged that her fear has been replaced with a confidence in her abilities to continue to live fully and productively as a business owner and spouse.